

Research Conference Support Program 2027 Round - Program Guidelines

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1. Summary of Key Details

Grant Program Details	
Opening date and time	Wednesday, 14th October 2026 10:00 AEST
Closing date and time	Thursday, 19th November 2026 10:00 AEST
Notification of outcome date	December 2026 – January 2027
Allocation of funds	By 30 June 2027
Conference delivery timeframe (for successful applications)	1 February – 31 December 2027
Final decision-maker	Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology ('Minister')
Administering NSW Government Agency	Office of the Chief Scientist & Engineer
Type of grant opportunity	Open, competitive
Grant value (total available funding for the grant and the available individual grant amounts, excluding GST)	Successful applicants will be awarded funds from a maximum available pool of \$100,000 (excluding GST). Each successful applicant can apply for and receive up to \$10,000 (excluding GST) at the discretion of the assessment panel.
Enquiries	raap.grants@chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au

2. Purpose of this Document

The *RCSP 2027 Round – Program Guidelines* ('Guidelines') contain information about the Research Conference Support Program grant. You must read these Guidelines before applying for the grant.

This document sets out:

- the purpose of the Program
- the eligibility criteria
- the evaluation criteria
- how applications are assessed
- how recipients will be monitored and evaluated.

3. About the Research Conference Support Program

3.1 Background

The NSW Government has released a suite of strategic policy documents, including the *NSW 20-Year R&D Roadmap (2022)*, *NSW Industry Policy (2025)*, and *NSW Innovation Blueprint (2025)* that recognise the opportunity to leverage NSW's competitive advantages in science, technology and innovation. Together, these evidence-based policies identify areas of existing and emerging competitive strength, opportunities to grow research and innovation capability, and the strategic technologies and industries that will support long-term economic prosperity, productivity and resilience in NSW.

The Research Attraction and Acceleration Program ('RAAP'), established in 2012, supports innovation and continued growth in NSW's research sector. Administered by the Office of the NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer (OCSE) within the NSW Premier's Department ('Department'), the RAAP's objective is to improve and accelerate NSW economic, societal, and environmental outcomes by attracting and retaining talent, building capability, attracting external investment and sustaining the NSW science and technology ecosystem.

The Conference Sponsorship Program ('CSP') was a long-running NSW Government initiative funded through the RAAP that supported conferences in New South Wales for more than a decade. In 2026, the CSP underwent a process of redesign. It is now relaunched as the Research Conference Support Program ('Program', 'RCSP') for 2027. The RCSP continues to support the delivery of research conferences that will be held in NSW.

3.2 Purpose & objectives

The Program recognises that high quality and inclusive research conferences in NSW deliver broad benefits to the NSW research community, including knowledge sharing and strengthened collaboration. However, there is a disproportionate burden carried by the organiser, which creates a barrier to greater collaboration in areas of strategic interest and the translation of research and innovation into economic and social benefits for NSW. Through NSW Government investment, the Program aims to strengthen the NSW research and innovation ecosystem by enabling connections, knowledge exchange and collaboration by supporting conferences aligned to NSW priorities.

The intended outputs of the Program are to:

- Reduce barriers to conference delivery
- Enable improved quality and higher impact of NSW research conferences
- Promote a more inclusive NSW science and technology conference ecosystem

The Program has been designed to achieve value for money through robust assessment of value. Value for money will be assessed by considering:

- The expected benefits of the conference, including its contribution to economic, social, environmental and technological outcomes for New South Wales;

- The applicant's capability and capacity to successfully deliver the proposed conference; and
- The necessity of NSW Government funding and the additional public value it enables.

3.3 Grant value

Successful applicants will be awarded funds from a maximum available pool of \$100,000 (excluding GST). Each successful applicant can apply for and receive up to \$10,000 (excluding GST) at the discretion of the assessment panel. The quantum of funding awarded to successful applicants will depend on the overall quantity and quality of applications received, with the final amount decided at the Minister's discretion.

3.4 Grant administration

The Research Conference Support Program is administered as a competitive, open grant and in accordance with the NSW [Grants Administration Guide](#) ('Guide') issued under Premier's Memorandum M2024-03.

The Program expenditure is approved by the Minister for Innovation, Science & Technology (the final decision-maker) through a formal and transparent process, based on written advice provided by the Office of the Chief Scientist & Engineer (the source agency) in accordance with section 6.3.5 of the Guide. Risks are managed in accordance with the Office of the Chief Scientist & Engineer's systems for risk management, including through these Guidelines.



Recipient from CSP 2025 Round - For Foods Sake 2025

4. Eligibility Criteria

4.1 Who is eligible to apply?

The following eligibility criteria must be met for an application to progress for assessment:

- The applicant must be from a NSW research institution or from the NSW community sector. This includes:
 - Universities / research organisations
 - Community groups
 - Non-profit organisations incorporated under the Federal Corporations Act 2001 as applied in NSW OR a national non-profit organisation planning a conference in NSW.

Professional Conference Organisers may apply in partnership with the above entities, but the application must be led by the eligible organisation and submitted by their authorised officer.

4.2 Who is not eligible to apply?

Applicants are *not* eligible to apply for the grant if they are any of the below:

- insolvent
- an individual
- partnership
- unincorporated association
- private company
- Commonwealth, state, territory or local government agency or body
- a Research & Innovation Network funded by OCSE

The Department, at its sole discretion, may decide that an organisation is ineligible for funding. This may include if the organisation is associated with any person or business activity that could cause reputational and/or other risks to the NSW Government.

4.3 Eligible projects

Funding can only be approved for eligible projects, for which the below must all apply:

- The request for funding is made in writing, via the submission portal on SmartyGrants;
- The conference is a science or technology research conference. For the purposes of the RCSP 2027 Round, this is defined as a formal meeting of various people, including researchers, industry and/or government representatives, and students, whose primary purpose is to share knowledge and promote collaboration on a particular scientific or technological research topic;
- The research conference is hosted at a venue/s in NSW;

- The research conference is to be held between February 2027 - December 2027;
- The research theme of the conference is science or technology related, covering topics such as (but not limited to):
 - Mathematical, information and computing sciences;
 - Physical, chemical and earth sciences;
 - Engineering, environmental sciences & renewable energy; and/or
 - Biological and biotechnological sciences.

4.4 Ineligible projects

Applications are ineligible if any of the below apply to the proposed conference:

- The conference received funding in the Conference Sponsorship Program (CSP) 2026 Round previously administered by OCSE;
- The subject matter and/or co-sponsors do not align with the values and objectives of the NSW Government (such as promotion alongside tobacco products, alcohol products, or gambling products).

The Department, at its sole discretion, may decide that a conference is ineligible for funding. This may include if the organisation is associated with any person or business activity that could cause reputational and/or other risks to the NSW Government.

4.5 Eligible project costs

Funding will take the form of a cash contribution from the Department, following the execution of an agreement between the applicant and the Department. The grant payment must be issued to the designated contract organisation.

Funds awarded can be expended on any aspect of research conference organisation occurring in NSW. Examples include (but are not limited to):

- speaker costs – airfares and accommodation;
- student travel / registration grants;
- venue hire;
- catering;
- promotion – marketing/advertising;
- audiovisual services;
- conference management fees;
- transportation;
- insurance.

You must demonstrate value for money by ensuring conference costs are reasonable and reflective of market rates. We may use industry cost benchmarks to assess whether costs are reasonable. You must provide financial acquittals to the Department. The Department will make the final decision on whether a claimed cost is eligible or reasonable (and only pay the reasonable amount). All eligible costs will be paid inclusive of GST.

Applicants must notify the Department if grant funding is secured from another source (including other NSW Government sources) and will be required to demonstrate that the funds will not be used in a duplicative way.

4.6 Additional eligibility requirements

Where an application is identified as not meeting the above eligibility criteria, the application may be set aside from further consideration at the absolute discretion of the Department. The Department may also seek clarification from any applicant in relation to its application, including seeking further information on the eligibility or assessment criteria.

5. Assessment Criteria

Proposals for grants from the Research Conference Support Program will be considered against the following criteria, which will inform the Assessment Panel's recommendation for funding to the Minister for Innovation, Science & Technology (the final decision-maker):

Assessment criteria	Weighting
Extent to which the proposed conference aligns with the NSW 20-Year R&D Roadmap , NSW Innovation Blueprint and NSW Industry Policy and demonstrates economic, environmental, social and/or technological benefits to New South Wales.	25%
Extent to which the proposed use of RAAP funding is expected to improve the quality of the conference, including enabling outputs or outcomes that may have not otherwise been achieved.	25%
Extent to which NSW Government funding is needed to support delivery of the conference and represents value for money to the NSW Government as a whole – with consideration to the proposed budget and financial contributions from other sources (including other NSW Government agencies).	25%
Extent to which inclusion (including but not limited to equity, diversity and student participation) will be ensured in the planning and delivery of the conference.	15%
Extent to which the applicant demonstrates that they have the capability and capacity to successfully deliver the conference, including relevant experience, governance and risk management processes, planning and overall conference deliverability.	10%

Applicants will be required to demonstrate how funding would support outcomes that may not otherwise occur and to provide evidence of how the funding may be used alongside other financial contributions. This approach is intended to ensure public funding is directed towards conferences where it will make the greatest difference in achieving the desired outcomes.

6. Application Process

6.1 How to apply

Before applying, you must read and understand these *Guidelines*.

Applications are due by 10:00 AEST on the 19th of November.

To apply you must:

1. Complete the SmartyGrants online application form at <https://chiefscientist.smartygrants.com.au/RSCP2027>
2. Provide all the information requested, including but not limited to:
 - Name of the proposed recipient of the funds (legal identity and trading name if applicable) and relevant entity details
 - The dollar amount of funding sought
 - When the funds are required (the conference date)
 - Responses to inform assessment against the eligibility and assessment criteria
 - Any requested attachments
3. Submit your application before the closing date and time.

Note:

- The application must be completed in its entirety to be eligible for consideration.
- You should clearly mark any information that should be treated confidentially.
- All eligible applicants will be assessed on merit against the assessment criteria. However, the decision-maker, at their discretion, may choose not to award funding to applicants under the Program.
- You should keep a copy of your application and any supporting documents.
- One application per applicant will be assessed. If more than one application for the same Program is submitted, only the latest application will be considered unless otherwise determined through consultation with the Department.

We will acknowledge that we have received your application after you submit through the online portal.

You are responsible for ensuring your application is complete and accurate. Giving false or misleading information is a serious offence under the *Crimes Act 1900 No 40 (NSW)*. We will investigate any false or misleading information and may exclude your application from further consideration.

Use of AI

Artificial Intelligence (AI) can assist in many aspects of the grant application process. However, it should be used to complement, not replace, human expertise and judgment. While the use of AI is not prohibited, applicants are advised to use it appropriately. Keep in mind that assessors are seeking authentic responses to the assessment criteria and often recognise when AI tools have been used.

Corrections

If you find an error in your application after submitting it, you should contact us immediately at raap.grants@chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au. We do not have to accept any additional information, nor requests from you to correct your application after the closing time. You cannot change your application after you have submitted your application. If we find an error or information that is missing, we may ask for clarification or additional information from you that will not change the nature of your application.

6.2 Support provided to applicant(s)

If you have any questions during the application period, please contact us at raap.grants@chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au. The Department will endeavour to respond to questions within three working days. Please note that the Department's responses to questions may be made available to the public through a Frequently Asked Questions page on the OCSE website.

7. Assessment Process

The assessment of applications will be led by the Department. Your application will be considered through a three-stage process, outlined in the following section.

7.1 Assessment stages

Stage 1 - Eligibility checks

The Department will conduct an initial eligibility screening for all applications according to the published eligibility criteria in *Section 4: Eligibility Criteria*. Only applications that meet all eligibility criteria will progress to assessment against the assessment criteria. Where the Department considers an application unsuitable or unsatisfactory against any criteria, we may exclude that application from further assessment.

Stage 2 - Assessment by the Assessment Panel

An Assessment Panel ('Panel') will assess each application against the assessment criteria set out in *Section 5: Assessment Criteria* and compare the merits of the application to other eligible applications. The membership of the Panel will be determined by the Department in its sole discretion and may include independent assessors from the broader NSW public service or research sector. The Panel members are expected to assess all eligible applications unless they have a declared conflict of interest for a certain application(s).

The Panel will then recommend which applications should receive funding, and the amount that may be awarded, which may be lower than the funding requested in an application.

When making these recommendations, the Panel may consider the following:

- The total funding available for the 2027 Program round.
- The assessment criteria outlined in *Section 5* of these Guidelines, as demonstrated in your response.
- The amount of funding requested with additional consideration to:
 - The requested amount against the proposed scope of the activities - i.e. does the Panel anticipate that the applicant could effectively deliver the activity with less funding. Advice may be sought from applicants to understand the potential impact if a decision was made to award less funding than was applied for.
 - Whether a reduction in funding awarded compared to the funding requested could pose significant risks to the success of the conference.
 - The extent to which the Panel believes an applicant has sufficient resources or may have alternative avenues available for funding other than this grant, including but not limited to funding received or expected from other NSW Government agencies.

Throughout this process, the Department may contact you to seek additional information about you or your application.

Stage 3 - Decision-making

The Panel will provide merit-based funding recommendations for the decision-maker's consideration. The Minister is the final decision-maker. The Minister will consider the recommendations from the Panel, before providing approval for final grant funding awards.

The Minister (or their delegate's decision) is final in all matters, including:

- the approval of the grant;
- the grant funding amount to be awarded; and
- the terms and conditions of the grant.

7.2 Notification of outcomes & announcement

We will advise the outcome of your application via email and/or through the SmartyGrants portal.

Successful applicants who accept the offer of a grant will then be required to enter into a Funding Agreement with the Department. A draft version of the Funding Deed can be found on the Program website on the [OCSE RCSP webpage](#). The OCSE Secretariat will work with the Department legal team and the applicant to review any changes proposed by applicants.

The Department will publish the details of successful recipients publicly within 45 days of the funding deed execution, in accordance with the requirements of section 6.5 of the *Grants Administration Guide*.

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified via email of the outcome of their application within 15 business days from the date of the Minister's final decision being received.

Unsuccessful applicants will be given the opportunity to receive feedback upon request. This feedback will be limited to the comments provided on their application by the Panel.



Recipient from CSP 2024 Round - International Global Navigation Satellite Systems - IGSS 2024

8. Probity

8.1 Probity and management of conflicts of interest

The Department has put in place processes including risk assessment and governance arrangements to maintain confidence that the grant opportunity process is fair and run according to the published Guidelines. This includes the requirement that any conflicts of interest must be declared and managed in accordance with the Premier's Department's Code of Conduct (for Department staff) and the Ministerial Code of Conduct (for the Minister). The Program incorporates appropriate safeguards against fraud, unlawful activities and other inappropriate conduct.

Decision makers may seek the guidance of an independent probity advisor as required.

Applicants must not lobby the NSW Government on an issue related or seen to be related to the Program that may or may not be perceived to give an unfair advantage to the applicant. Applicants are required to comply with all applicable laws including the [NSW Lobbyists Code of Conduct](#).

8.2 Confidential information

Other than information available in the public domain, you agree not to disclose to any person, other than us, any confidential information relating to the grant application and/ or agreement, without our prior written approval. The obligation will not be breached where you are required by law, Parliament or a stock exchange to disclose the relevant information or where the relevant information is publicly available (other than through breach of a confidentiality or non-disclosure obligation).

We may at any time, require you to arrange for you, your employees, agents or subcontractors to give a written undertaking relating to non-disclosure of our confidential information in a form we consider acceptable.

We will keep any information in connection with the funding agreement confidential to the extent that it meets all the three conditions below:

- You clearly identify the information as confidential and explain why we should treat it as confidential;
- The information is commercially sensitive;
- Revealing the information would cause unreasonable harm to you or someone else.

We will not be in breach of any confidentiality agreement if the information is disclosed to:

- The Assessment Panel and other NSW Government employees and contractors to help us manage the program effectively;
- Employees and contractors of the Department so we can research, assess, monitor and analyse our programs and activities;

- Employees and contractors of other NSW Government departments or agencies for any purposes, including government administration, research or service delivery;
- Other Commonwealth, State, Territory or local government agencies in program reports and consultations;
- The Auditor-General, Ombudsman or Privacy Commissioner;
- The responsible Minister or Secretary; or
- A House or a Committee of the NSW Parliament.

8.3 Complaint handling

The applicant must lodge a complaint with the Department in writing and submit it to raap.grants@chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au

If you do not agree with the way the Department has handled your enquiry or complaint, you may wish to contact the NSW Ombudsman. The NSW Ombudsman will not consider a complaint unless the matter has been first raised directly with the Department.

9. Successful grant recipients

9.1 Grant Agreement

Before any funds are issued, all recipients must sign a Funding Deed agreeing to the funding terms and conditions. Full details of these Terms and Conditions can be found in the *draft Funding Agreement* available on the [OCSE RCSP webpage](#).

Some key terms of the draft Funding Deed include the requirements that:

1. Recipients provide two complimentary registrations for Department staff to attend the conference in person;
2. While the activity must take place throughout 2027, funds must be allocated to the Grantee by 30 June 2027;
3. Recipients must use the funds on eligible expenses for the purpose for which the funding was awarded, unless written permission has been obtained from OCSE;
4. Recipients must advise the Department of the details of additional sources of funding for the conference (such as external sponsors or other NSW Government sources) as soon as possible;
5. Recipients should not seek association or co-investment from sponsors that are not aligned to the NSW Government values. The Department reserves the right to terminate the deed in the case that risk arises that could cause reputational and/or other risks to the NSW Government;
6. Recipients must comply with the acquittal and reporting requirements. Further details of these indicative requirements can be found in Section 9.4 and in the draft *Funding Deed*;

7. All recipients of NSW Government funding must provide acknowledgement of the financial support. Further details of these acknowledgement requirements can be found in Section 9.3 and in the draft *Funding Deed*;
8. Recipients must return any unspent funds in accordance with the Funding Deed;
9. If you become aware of a breach of terms and conditions under the Funding Deed, you must contact us immediately.

Note that the above is not an exhaustive list. Details of the full Terms and Conditions can be found in the draft *Funding Deed* available on the [OCSE RCSP webpage](#).

9.2 Payment

The grant will be paid and distributed directly in a single tranche to each successful applicant. Invoices for grant payments must be submitted and paid by June 2027.

Grants are assessable income for taxation purposes, unless exempted by a taxation law. We recommend you seek independent professional advice on your taxation obligations. We do not provide advice on your particular taxation circumstances. All payments are inclusive of GST.

9.3 Acknowledgment of funding

Acknowledging grant funding from the NSW Government consistently is important so that audiences understand the NSW Government's contribution, in accordance with the requirements of the *Grants Administration Guide*.

As stated in the draft *Funding Deed*, successful recipients should provide the following minimum acknowledgments:

- acknowledgement of the funding at the opening and closing ceremonies of the conference;
- acknowledgement with the NSW Government logo and preferred URL link on the conference website; and
- acknowledgement with NSW Government logo in printed delegate material.

This may be done by:

- applying the NSW Government logo with acknowledgement label; and/ or
- using acknowledgement statements that appear alongside the NSW Government logo or within the copy of a communication (where space permits).

You must submit all communication materials acknowledging NSW Government funding to the Department representative for written consent. Once approval has been received, you can organise production.

Further information on providing acknowledgment of funding can be found on the NSW Government's [Grants and funding acknowledgement page](#).

9.4 Indicative reporting and acquittal requirements

All recipients will be required to comply with the Department's acquittal and reporting requirements. These are expected to include:

Interim reporting

Two months prior to the conference date (or as soon as the funding deed is executed, if executed within two months of the conference's start date), you must submit a progress report. You will be provided with a report template by the Department for your completion. Reporting requirements will include:

- Update on the planning and process;
- A draft program for the conference, including key speakers;
- Links or materials that demonstrate ongoing acknowledgement of funding;
- A budget update including indication of any newly sourced income for the conference.

Final reporting

Within 45 days after the conference has been completed, you must submit a final report. You will be provided with a report template by the Department for your completion.

Reporting requirements will include:

- The main outputs / outcomes of the conference and the benefits realised for NSW;
- Financial acquittals, including expenditure of the grant and receipts (if requested);
- Media collateral that the Department may use in its promotional materials, such as photographs and testimonials.

Submitted acquittals will be reviewed by the Department. Where the Department deems acquittal requirements are not adequately met, it may seek additional information from recipients and take appropriate action in accordance with the terms of the Funding Deed.

9.5 Evaluation

The Department will evaluate the Research Conference Support Program to measure how well the overall outcomes and objectives have been achieved. We may use information from your application and reports for this purpose.

We may also interview you or ask you for more information to help us understand how the Program impacted you, and to evaluate how effective the Program was in achieving its outcomes. We may contact you up to three years after you receive your final grant payment associated with the Program for more information to assist with this evaluation.

The Department and the NSW Audit Office reserve the right to undertake an audit of Program funding and support within seven years. Tracking and reporting will be a requirement of the funding agreement.

10. Version History

Version	Publish Date	Changes
1	13/10/2026	-
2	15/10/2026	Amended error in 'Closing Date' in Section 6.1.